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Return To:

INDEXING AND FILING CITY COUNCIL RECORDS

What are effective methods for the city clerk to use in indexing and filing records of city council actions?

This report deals with the indexing and filing of city council records and is complementary to MIS Report No. 138, "Recording Council Actions in the City Clerk's Office." This report is based upon installations made by Remington Rand, Inc., in the offices of the city clerks of Los Angeles, San Jose, South San Francisco, and San Francisco, California. Thus, one small, one medium, and two large cities are represented in this discussion. This report does not attempt to report a comprehensive survey of indexing and filing practices currently in use, but rather to describe in some detail two distinct systems of filing council records and of effective indexing methods.

Indexing and filing are the vital last phase in the total process of maintaining adequate records of city council actions. The ability of the clerk to produce quickly and positively the single requested record from among an ever-increasing volume of records on myriads of subjects is dependent upon the selection and effective use of a sound classification for the records, maintenance of accurate and complete indexes to the records, and the consistent application of correct filing procedures.

The filing system used by the city clerk should insure the prompt finding of records sought and permit the conclusion that the record does not exist if it is not readily found. Positive finding, particularly in small cities, should not be dependent upon the memory of the city clerk or of any subordinate nor upon "trick" devices known or understood only by incumbents. The system in use should be sound in principle and reduced to writing in a filing manual which explains its use clearly to existing and new employees.

The effective operation of the chief administrator's office and of the entire city government is partially dependent upon the use by the city clerk of sound filing principles and practices. The systems described below are not the only ones by which the clerk can produce the desired results, but they do illustrate up-to-date methods which are working successfully. These systems not only produce individual records upon request but also provide as part of the indexing process a complete legislative history on each subject handled by the council. The latter is of particular value to the chief administrator and the council.

The Pattern of Indexes for Council Records

The pattern of indexes needed for adequate indexing of council records is unusually complex, partly because of the complex nature of the records themselves. The table below summarizes the classification of council records described in MIS Report No. 138 and the types of indexes required.

Records Classification 1	Filing Arrange- ment 2	Special Indexes 3	Numeric Index 4	Alphabetic Index 5
<u>1. Primary records</u>				
a. Ordinances				
(1) Without Code	Numeric	Numeric Alphabetic	x	x
(2) With Code				
(a) Ordin. file	Numeric	Numeric	x	x
(b) Code	---	Alphabetic		
b. Resolutions	Numeric	Numeric	x	x
c. Minutes	Chronologic	---	x	x
<u>2. Related Records</u>				
a. Special related records	Numeric	Numeric	x	x
b. General related records				
(1) Numeric system	Numeric	---	x	x
(2) Alphabetic system	Alphabetic	Subject	x	x

Since the minutes constitute the most important single record of all council actions, it is most important to index them adequately. The simplest and most effective means of positively identifying the subject of a council action and the records which are related to that action is by assignment of a serial number; these are commonly called "file numbers" and will hereafter be referred to as such. The use of file numbers in turn requires a numeric index as shown in column 4 of the table above. A numeric filing system always requires the use of a supplementary alphabetic index for cross-referencing by subject; this alphabetic index is identified by column 5 above.

It is not sufficient, however, to index the minutes alone; the other primary records and the related records too must be adequately indexed in relation to the minutes. Since the minutes explicitly or implicitly refer to all the other council records, it takes only an extension of the numeric and alphabetic indexes for the minutes to make these indexes serve all the other records. Therefore, the numeric and alphabetic indexes, identified by columns 4 and 5 of the above table, are made applicable (as indicated by the "x's" in those columns) to all council records except the ordinance code (which is discussed below). Detailed descriptions of the indexes themselves and of the procedures for their use are given below under the headings, "Numeric Filing of General Related Records," and "Alphabetic Filing of General Related Records."

The numeric and alphabetic indexes mentioned above, however, must be augmented by several other indexes, if the complex pattern of council records is to be adequately indexed. The following discussion is limited to the "special indexes" listed in column 3 of the above table for primary records and for special related records.

Ordinances. It is common practice to assign to ordinances the next serial number in a consecutive series and to file ordinances in that numeric order, both in the file of official copies (which may be in "book" form) and in the file of extra copies available for distribution upon request. Such a numeric filing arrangement requires use of a numeric index containing at least the number and subject of the ordinance and possibly the date of adoption and the file number.

The alphabetic index to all council records is basically adequate for finding ordinances when they are requested by subject. However, that index is likely to be too cumbersome for use at the counter in handling the public, whose interest in council records is related largely to ordinance subject matter. Therefore most city clerks find it desirable to maintain a special alphabetic index to all ordinances for quicker finding of ordinance subject matter. However, the need for such a special alphabetic index is related in part to the existence or non-existence of an ordinance code.

If there is an ordinance code published in "book" form, it is obvious that it should have a complete subject index to facilitate reference by officials and citizens. Such an index is revised whenever the code itself is revised. Since the public interest in ordinances is largely confined to the subject matter of the code, it is likely that there is no need for a special alphabetic index to non-code ordinances. Therefore the alphabetic index to all council records is presumably adequate to serve non-code ordinances.

If there is no ordinance code, however, the maintenance of a complete special alphabetic index for all ordinances is essential for control over legislative action, entirely aside from the desirability of such an index for greater convenience in serving the public. Without such an index, it is almost impossible for a city to avoid three major defects in municipal legislation and law enforcement: (1) new ordinances may be enacted without regard to existing ordinances, resulting in duplication and conflicts; (2) obsolete, conflicting and duplicating ordinances may remain in force indefinitely; and (3) enforcement of all ordinances is a hit-or-miss affair, because it is difficult to know which ordinances or parts thereof are actually in effect.

These defects of maintaining uncodified ordinances without a special alphabetic index, however, are primarily defects of operating without an ordinance code. It would seem wiser for any city lacking both an ordinance code and a special alphabetic index to ordinances to concentrate on developing a code rather than an index. For further information on ordinance codification see MIS Reports No. 37, "How to Codify Municipal Ordinances" and No. 52, "The Preparation and Use of Administrative Codes."

Resolutions. Resolutions, like ordinances, typically are assigned the next unused serial number and are filed in serial number order. Some cities maintain two or more series of numbered resolutions on different types of subject matter. For each such series of resolutions a separate special numeric index is required, similar in form and content to that maintained for ordinances. In most cities, the importance of the subject matter acted upon by resolution does not warrant maintenance of a special alphabetic index. In a city which adopts relatively more important subject matter by resolution and to which relatively frequent reference is made by subject, a special alphabetic index may be justified for the same reasons as for ordinances.

Special Related Records. Records such as maps, deeds, and contracts, which are segregated from the bulk of related records for separate filing, may be filed by subject, particularly if the volume of each type is relatively small, and thus require an alphabetic index. It is more common, however, to assign serial numbers to such records and file them numerically, and to maintain special numeric indexes, just as for ordinances and resolutions. The same comments made above concerning the need

for a special alphabetic index for resolutions apply equally to the maintenance of a special alphabetic index for one or more types of special related records.

Numeric Filing of General Related Records

The use of file numbers to identify council actions and the records to which such actions pertain leads naturally to the choice of numerical filing of the general related records; this is the more common choice. The following discussions will describe the basic features of a system employing specific types of numeric and alphabetic indexes in conjunction with numeric filing of general related records. These basic features exist in the offices of the city clerks of Los Angeles, South San Francisco, and San Francisco.

Numeric Index. While it is possible to maintain a numeric index in a columnar journal, a "visible" type of card system is much more satisfactory. One such numeric index is illustrated by Form No. 1 at the end of this report. This card is designed to perform the following functions:

1. Numeric index to the location in the minutes of all references to file numbers. The card thus provides a "legislative history" of council actions on each file number.

2. Numeric index to the filing location of records related to council actions. This applies not only to the general related records, since the file numbers identify their filing location, but also to ordinances, resolutions and special related records, since their special numeric index numbers are also entered on the numeric index card; the latter practice eliminates such reference that would otherwise have to be made to the alphabetic index.

Thus the numeric index leads to the filing location of all council records and to all minute references to a single file number.

Alphabetic Index. Development of an adequate alphabetic index for cross-referencing by subject is relatively difficult as compared with developing the numeric index. The alphabetic index must cover not only the most apparent subject of a record but also any related subject by which it may be requested. For this reason, the alphabetic index is sometimes called the relative index. The indexer must recognize that he himself will not approach a record from the same point of view over a period of time and that people at any one time request a record in different ways. Hence the indexing system must include all possible subjects or topics which may provide clues to the identity of the records and hence to their filing locations.

In addition the index also should include all names of persons, organizations and locations which are referred to in the records. The person requesting a record may have a very hazy recollection of its subject-matter but may accurately recall a name included in it; in such cases, inclusion of names in the index may provide the only clues to the filing locations of records.

Thus the number of alphabetic cross-references required by the subject of a single file number varies considerably with the nature of the record or records covered by a file number and may run as high as six or more. The alphabetic index, therefore, must take the form of a file card, preferably with a visible system. One such type is illustrated in Form No. 2 at the end of this report. Since these cards contain file numbers and the serial numbers of special numeric indexes, they lead indirectly (through the numeric index) to the minutes and directly to the filing locations of all the records.

The alphabetic index, if relatively small, can be maintained with a single alphabetic sequence of subjects and names; or, as it expands in size, it can be subdivided into as many segments, each with its own straight alphabetic sequence, as may facilitate speed and ease of reference. San Jose splits its alphabetic index under two main headings: general and property. Los Angeles uses four main headings: city departments, street names, proper names, and miscellaneous. San Francisco reserves portions of its index for traffic regulations, appropriation ordinances, and amendments to the municipal code since the last publication of individual chapters. Thus there is unlimited flexibility in the classification of subjects to speed reference to the alphabetic index.

Procedures. The following steps are taken with each communication received by the clerk for council action:

1. Serial Number Assignment. The first step is determination whether a communication contains subject-matter which is an addition to a former subject or is on a subject presented for the first time. After carefully reading the communication to determine its subject, the alphabetic index is checked to see whether it contains any of the subjects or names of the new communication. If such subject or name does appear in the alphabetic index, its file number is noted and the file is inspected to determine whether the new communication is pertinent to the old file. If it is, it is attached to the old file for presentation to the council.

If the communication represents new subject matter, it is assigned the next unused file number, which is entered on each separate record which may comprise the communication on a numeric index card, and on the file folder or "backer" used for the communication. Los Angeles uses the less expensive "backer," which is a heavy-paper legal-size sheet having a one-half inch flap which folds down over the top of the communication. These backers are made for odd and even numbers, the printing being arranged so that the heavy end falls alternately to the left and right, so as to balance the thickness of material in the two sides of each file drawer. (Use of the backers is not practicable, however, with the alphabetic system described below.) The file number should of course also be added to any forms used by the clerk during council meeting for recording council actions.

2. Indexing Before Council Meetings. The numeric index card for the new subject is prepared first. The practice in San Francisco may be illustrated by an example: a "request from the United Veterans Council for a parade permit for July 4th and requesting that the city erect a reviewing stand at the Civic Center." The portion of the above in quotation marks would serve as a "digest" of the communication entered at the top of the numeric index card; this would be underlined as indicated for preparation of alphabetic index cards. This digest is too long to serve as a title in the visible margin at the bottom of the numeric index card; hence, "request for parade permit" is a suitable title.

The numeric index card is then filed in numeric order. Los Angeles makes use of a work card which fits into the back of the pocket above and facing the numeric index card (Form No. 1 at the end of this report) to which it is related. This work card is used to charge out the material when it is loaned and to record the location of the file during the legislative process. The function of the work card might be combined with the numeric index card, either on the face or reverse of the latter.

Alphabetic index cards are then prepared. For the illustrative communication described above, the following are needed, on which the first line contains the subject of the cross reference, the date of the communication, and the file number:

Parade permit 6-24-54 24567
United Veterans Council for July 4

July 4th celebration 6-24-54 24567
United Veterans Council for parade

Reviewing stand 6-24-54 24567
United Veterans Council for
July 4 parade

United Veterans Council 6-24-54 24567
Parade permit & reviewing stand
for July 4

(Name of official) 6-24-54 24567
United Veterans Council Request for
July 4 parade permit

An example of a cross-index card for an ordinance and containing both the ordinance and file numbers is the following, in which "O" refers to ordinance number and "F" to file number:

So Calif Edison Co	O-97587
Power Lines Nly Imperial	1-22-51
Hiway Wly Coast Blvd-Auth	F-46274
Condem prop for	

3. Indexing After Council Meetings. Upon completion of the minutes of each council meeting, entries of the council actions taken with respect to the file numbers entered in the minutes are made on the corresponding numeric index cards. At the same time any additional cross-referencing indicated by additional information or activity is added to the alphabetic index.

Upon completion of legislative action on the communication, the file, which heretofore has been considered "active," becomes "inactive" and is prepared for filing. Typically, the file contains only general related records pertaining to that file number. The file may also contain, however, copies of ordinances, resolutions and special related records, even though the primary filing location of such records is elsewhere; this is a matter of local practice. At any rate reference is made in the file to the serial numbers of special numeric indexes corresponding with such ordinances, resolutions and related records pertaining to that file number; and such serial numbers of special numeric indexes are also entered on the numeric index card. Excerpts from the minutes are inserted in the files when motions are brought in, or discussions take place, for which there are no specific communications pertaining thereto.

If a separate work card has been used, it is now destroyed. The general numeric index card is removed from the active file of such cards and filed with the inactive cards. Thus the active numeric index card file indicates at any one time the matters still pending before the council.

Development and Application of Retention Periods. The first step in developing retention periods for general related records is to establish a subject classification and retention period for each subject. As each file becomes inactive, a retention period is applied according to the established policy. If the file has several records which, according to the retention plan, have varying retention periods, the longest of these retention periods should be applied to the entire file. Then,

the annual or semi-annual destruction date, which follows the completion of the retention period which starts with the current date, should be entered on both the numeric index card and the file folder or backer.

When the file is moved from the inactive offices files to storage, it should be filed first by destruction date and then in numeric sequence (though not in chronological numeric sequence since there will be missing numbers due to varying destruction dates). This plan is superior to filing of all files in straight numeric sequence since all files would have to be repeatedly searched for destruction dates. The particular file can be easily found, before destruction, under the first plan as under the second, since reference to the numeric index card shows under which destruction date a file number can be found.

Alphabetic Correspondence File. Neither Los Angeles nor San Francisco assigns file numbers to communications such as these: simple requests for information or reports (which are not even presented to the council); invitations to the council; presentation of routine published reports; notations in the minutes concerning delegations of distinguished visitors, birthday congratulations, etc. These matters are excluded from the numeric index on the grounds that they require no "legislative" action; hence, they cannot be filed with general related records, since they have no file numbers. Therefore, they are filed in simple alphabetic correspondence files. They are indexed in the alphabetic index, however; since the cards for such references do not contain file numbers, it is apparent that the records pertaining to such alphabetic references are to be found in the alphabetic correspondence files.

Alphabetic Filing of General Related Records

Although the use of file numbers for indexing council minutes and records leads more commonly to numeric filing of general related records, it does not preclude the use of an alphabetic system for the filing of general related records. The latter type of system is discussed below, while an evaluation of the two approaches to filing of general related records follows.

Alphabetic Classifications of General Related Records. Although there are additional types of alphabetical filing systems, only two are considered as suitable for use by the city clerk in conjunction with a file number system.

First is what might be called an "alphabetic subject" system, similar in nature to the arrangement of alphabetic correspondence files. There is no logical connection between subjects filed next to each other; no subject is subordinate to another subject as a rule, although a limited number of subjects may be sub-divided into sub-subjects. This simplest of alphabetic arrangements is suitable for relatively small volumes of records.

Second is what might be called an "alphabetic classified subject" system, the use of which becomes necessary if the volume of records expands beyond the practical limits of the simpler "alphabetic subject" system. It arranges all records under a relatively limited number of major or first subjects; each of these is further classified into subordinate second, third, fourth, fifth, etc., subjects, depending on the volume of records and the complexity of their subject matter. In each series, the subjects are arranged in alphabetic order under the preceding series, except that any "general" subject appears first. The entire subject classification represents a logical organization of subject matter. The major subjects are selected to a large extent on the basis of relative volumes of records and with consideration of the activities and reference needs of the organization. The subject classification used in San Jose, Calif., is shown at the end of this report as an example of an "alphabetic classified subject" system.

Either of these alphabetic systems is sufficiently flexible to permit the inclusion or exclusion of numerically arranged ordinances, resolutions and special related records. Each such "segregated" group of records can be arranged in serial numeric order as a subdivision of the subject which covers it, with each group as a whole being located in the files in the position determined for its general subject by the subject classification. At the same time copies of such numerically-filed records may be filed alphabetically according to their specific subjects. Thus the scope of the subject classification of either alphabetic system described above can include all council records, all related records, or only general related records, as desired.

It is important at this point to recognize an important difference between the scope of "subjects" under numeric and alphabetic systems for filing of general related records. Under the numeric system, each single parade permit, for example, is treated as a separate subject for purposes of assigning file numbers; only if a new communication to the council relates to a specific parade permit for which a file number has previously been established is that communication added to the established file. Under the alphabetic system, however, all parade permits issued over a period of time end up in the same file folder (or in successive folders if the volume warrants); however, a new file number would be assigned under the alphabetic system, as under the numeric system, for each separate parade permit.

Subject Index. Use of an alphabetic subject system requires a special "subject index." Each subject for which a file folder has been established must be identified in the subject index. The subject index is needed to indicate the sequence of file folders in the drawers; in this respect it performs the same function as a numeric index in identifying the numeric location of subject-matter. The subject index is also needed to identify the subjects for which folders have been created, in order that unnecessary creation of new subject folders may be avoided.

If the simpler "alphabetic subject" system is used, the subject index may appropriately take the form of 3 x 5-inch cards with the subjects being arranged in straight alphabetic order except for the subdivision of a relatively few subjects. If the "alphabetic classified subject" system is used, the subject index must be maintained in loose-leaf notebook form, in order to reveal the arrangement and inter-relationships of major and subordinate subjects; such inter-relationships cannot be made readily apparent by consecutive 3 x 5-inch cards.

Numeric Index. The numeric index described previously under "Numeric Filing of General Related Records" is the same in design and function for the "Alphabetic Filing of General Related Records," with two differences: (1) the file numbers of the numeric index are no longer an index to the filing arrangement of the general related records, since this function is performed by the special subject index described above; and (2) the file numbers, added to individual council communications, identify which of a number of records filed in a single folder by subject are related to a specific council action since the scope of "subject" under the alphabetic system leads to the accumulation in a single folder of records with different file numbers.

Alphabetic Index. An alphabetic index, basically the same in function and design as that described above for the numeric system, is required for alphabetic subject systems. However, the style of entries on the alphabetic index cards must be somewhat different under the "alphabetic classified subject" system in order to indicate the location of the record under the subject index. For example, the illustrative communication on a parade permit, cited previously, might be "coded" for filing under the subject index as follows:

Licenses and Permits	(major or first subject)
Streets	(one of several second subjects under L&P)
Parades	(one of several third subjects under Streets)

The style of entries on alphabetic index cards must therefore point to the filing location of the folder containing parade permits. Those illustrated previously for use with the numeric system would be changed to read as follows to fit the alphabetic system:

Parade permit			
See	L&P	STREETS	
July 4th celebration	6-24-54	24567	
L&P	STREETS	PARADES	
Reviewing stand	6-24-54	24567	
L&P	STREETS	PARADES	
United Veterans Council	6-24-54	24567	
Parade permit			
L&P	STREETS	PARADES	
(Name of official)	6-24-54	24567	
United Veterans Council	Parade permit		
L&P	STREETS	PARADES	

The first card illustrated above is a general card for the folder for "parade permits," and makes no reference to individual records contained therein. Such general alphabetic index cards are prepared for all subjects in the subject index (except first subjects) to show under what first and second subjects the "final" subject can be found. If the illustrative communication under consideration is asked for by the subject "parade permit," the record can be found in that folder and there is no need for an additional index card containing specific date and file number references; but if the communication is asked for by other subjects or by names, specific cards are needed. The additional index cards illustrated above, therefore, are illustrative of those prepared individually for each particular record and contain date and file number references in addition to the indication of the filing location of the folder for "parade permits."

Procedures. The same procedures previously described for the numeric system are applicable to the alphabetic system with these few differences:

1. In opening up a numeric index card for a new communication, the subject index "coding" should also be added (e.g. L&P STREETS PARADES) to indicate the filing location of the record. This must be entered on the record itself for later filing and is easily added to the numeric index card.

2. After coding the new communication and entering that subject code on the numeric index card, it is a good practice to place in the file folder which will eventually receive that communication an appropriate colored card or sheet which "flags" the fact that a communication pertaining to that subject is before the council. This helps to prevent premature filing of other records which should be added to the communication for council consideration.

3. In the coding of a new communication, it will occasionally become apparent that no established subject fits in and that a new subordinate subject should be added to the subject matter.

Development and Application of Retention Periods. The first step in developing retention periods is facilitated by the existence of the subject index as compared with the numeric filing system for which a type of subject index must be developed solely for retention period purposes. With the "alphabetic subject" system, the retention period for each subject is entered on its subject index card. With the "alphabetic classified subject" system, the same retention period can often be applied to entire first, second, and third subjects, making it unnecessary to consider each subordinate subject individually. Such retention periods are entered on the subject index itself in either margin.

Retention periods established in the subject index are applied to file folders when the retention periods are first established and when new subject folders are created but not when individual records are filed. Indication of retention periods on file folders is done in a distinctive manner by use of labels of a different color or in a different position, or both. There are two general methods by which retention periods may be entered on file folders:

1. If the volume of records on a subject is relatively small, so that segregation of these records into separate folders by annual or semi-annual groups is unwarranted, then a label is added to the folder to indicate a general retention period such as "two years." Periodically, as a new record is added to the folder, the age of records in the back of the folder is noted, and those older than the retention period are destroyed. Generally such folders are never transferred to storage since only the more recent materials are retained.

2. If the volume of records on a subject is large, segregation of records for specific annual or other periods is made, in some circumstances within single folders but more often by use of separate folders. Labels indicate specific date periods (e.g. "July-Dec.1954") or destruction dates (e.g. "Dec. 1954"). These folders would periodically be transferred to storage, as necessary to relieve crowded office space, and would be merged with previously transferred records first by destruction date and then by subject classification.

Destruction dates also are entered on numeric index cards when they are opened and coded with the subject classification. These destruction dates indicate the primary location of the file folder in storage which contains the particular record.

Elimination of Numeric Index. Small cities, preferring the alphabetic arrangement of general related records but seeking to minimize the indexing work, may drop the numeric index and use only the subject and alphabetic indexes. This virtually precludes a satisfactory index to the minutes. This defect may not be too serious if the volume of minutes and records is relatively limited, and if the date and nature of the council action is entered on each record or on its alphabetic index cards, or both. Searching the minutes for specific entries will be slower than if a numeric index existed, but desired entries can be found without undue difficulty if the indexing style of the minutes is satisfactory.

Evaluation of Numeric and Alphabetic Filing of General Related Records

The following discussion suggests some of the apparent advantages of each of the two basic systems for classifying and filing general related records. The advantages of the numeric system are the following:

1. Filing and Finding. It is easier and faster to file and find under a numeric system, provided that numbers are not transposed either on the file or in the mind of the clerk. It is also easier to determine whether any files are missing, by identification of missing serial numbers.
2. Ease of Application. The numeric system requires less thought in coding records for correct filing. No thought is required to assign the next unused serial number, whereas selection of the correct subject classification under an alphabetic system requires an intelligent understanding of the entire subject index, particularly under the "alphabetic classified subject" system.
3. Ease of Installation. The numeric system is easier to install. Development of a good subject classification and index for the "alphabetic classified subject" system requires reading of all the records and much careful thought. Development of an adequate subject classification for the "alphabetic subject" system is simpler but still involves more thought than for the installation of a numeric system.
4. Transferring Files. The transfer of files to storage is easier under the numeric system because all consecutive file folders are transferred, and the numeric sequence with previously transferred folders is maintained. Under alphabetic systems, however, thought must be given to the selection of subject folders to be transferred, and they are generally merged by subject with previously transferred materials. Note, however, the advantage cited later for the alphabetic system in retaining records on certain more important subjects in the office files.
5. Fewer Indexes. The alphabetic systems require maintenance of an additional index--the subject index. Pure maintenance of this index requires relatively little effort, however. It is the original development of the classification and its index, as part of the initial installation of the system, which requires much effort. Maintenance of the numeric index is slightly simpler under the numeric system, since the subject index coding should be added to the numeric index as an extra step under the alphabetic systems.

The advantages of alphabetic systems are the following:

1. Direct Filing. All numeric filing has the disadvantage of being "indirect" in that one must always consult the alphabetic index first to ascertain the numeric code to the filing location. All alphabetic filing, in contrast, is "direct," since one can go directly to the files in many cases (after the subject index becomes largely known by memory) without prior reference to the subject or alphabetic indexes and find the proper folder with virtually no "searching." To the extent that, for any one record, the file clerk must consult the alphabetic index and/or subject index before going to the files, the alphabetic system has no advantage in this respect; this is true in roughly half the cases.
2. Less Cross-referencing Needed. Because alphabetic filing is direct, and one can readily search file folders on a selective basis by subject for an elusive record, cross-referencing in the alphabetic index need not be as thorough or minute as with numeric filing, under which it may be nearly impossible to find the record if cross-referencing was inadequate.
3. Combines Records by Subject. The alphabetic systems bring together into the same or consecutive folders all records of the same detailed or related subject matter. This advantage is most valuable when records must be analyzed in order to defend, administer or change existing policy. This is not only an important advantage; it is a controlling objective in the choice of filing system for certain types of records which must be so analyzed. In contrast, the numeric system tends to

scatter the same records, although they can be combined for analysis with greater effort than is required under the alphabetic systems.

4. Retaining Vital Records in Office Files. The alphabetic system facilitates retention in office files of related records of the most important subjects having the highest values. All records of a single subject or group of subjects, no matter how old, may be retained in office files for more convenient reference. In contrast, the numeric system inevitably moves to storage all records created within a given period of time, regardless of their different reference values.

5. Applicable to Other Clerk Records. It is very likely that certain of the records handled by the clerk, under functions other than that of clerk of the council, are being filed under an alphabetic system because of the advantages of alphabetic subject filing cited above. There is an advantage to the clerk and his employees in employing the same basic system for such other records and for council records, even though the latter have the additional file numbers and numeric index not used for the other records. If this is done, the subject index to all records filed under the alphabetic system can separate council records from the other records, if it is advantageous to do so, although such separation is not essential so long as the council records are separately identified and controlled by the file numbers and numeric index.

Summary. The numeric indexing of council records and minutes provides, for both systems, positive identification in the minutes and in the files. The above analysis of the relative advantages of numeric and alphabetic systems indicates a rather difficult choice between them for the filing arrangement of general related records. Both systems are flexible and capable of unlimited expansion. Each system is relatively simple to use in some features and more difficult in others.

The numeric system of filing general related records is entirely suitable for cities of all sizes. The suitability of the alphabetic system, in comparison with the numeric system, is related to the size of the city and the volume of its records. Smaller cities may find the "alphabetic subject" system better suited to their needs. Medium-sized cities would find that alphabetic filing requires such an extensive subject classification that the "alphabetic classified subject" system must be adopted, in lieu of the simpler "alphabetic subject" system.

Further expansion in the complexity of the subject-matter handled, however makes the subject index of the "alphabetic classified subject" system so bulky as to be unwieldy. Under such circumstances, the numeric filing of general related records is probably more practical.

Filing Supplies, Procedures, and Responsibility

The best of methods for classifying and indexing records will not achieve the desired results without adequate attention to other important features of a total "filing system."

The first such feature is filing supplies. Correct selection and use of file guides, folders and labels is important; in fact, they apply the classification and indexing methods to the physical arrangement of file folders.

The second feature is good filing procedures which are soundly conceived and consistently applied. Development of a suitable manual, describing the essential features of the system installed and the procedures for maintaining and using it, is a most important objective. Preparation of such a manual generally requires a thorough analysis of the existing system which leads to improvements which might not

otherwise occur. The manual establishes positive control by the clerk over the filing work of his subordinates and assures him of a higher and more consistent standard of performance. The manual facilitates the training not only of existing employees but particularly of new employees on a temporary or permanent basis. Lastly, it provides means by which another person can operate the system during the temporary absence of the clerk or upon his separation from the service. Specific procedures covered by the manual should include the following:

1. Inspection of records to verify that they have been released for filing and physical preparation for filing.
2. Correct coding of records with subject classifications under alphabetic systems. It has been said that "correct coding is the key that opens the file and finds the records; incorrect coding is the key that locks the file and hides the record."
3. Correct procedures in making entries in the numeric and alphabetic indexes. The substance of the entries is most important, but a consistently uniform style in making them also is essential. The former affects the success, and the latter the speed, in finding records.
4. Use of tickler file for later follow-up and rigorous charge-out control over records loaned from the files.

The last feature is the delegation by the clerk of responsibility for operation of the filing system. One person should be made completely responsible; and only that person, plus others subject to his supervision in larger offices, should do filing work and have access to the files. Without such control, no filing system can be maintained at high standards.

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INDEXING AND FILING COUNCIL RECORDS

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

38304 - K Hahn - Resol prep Ord - wash food containers (jars tin cans etc)
Detail of Communication before disposal

File No.	Communication	Council Dist.
38304	K Munn - Resol Ord all food containers washed before disposal	

Note: This is a visible index card ("Kardex") used for the numeric index. A work card (not shown) is filed above and facing this card to charge out material on loan, and it contains spaces for file number, date, and the persons or agencies borrowing material.

FORM NO. 2

Audit 6-20-51 48871
Finance Comt engage firms
conduct annual

Billboards 6-20-51 48870
Freeways-mo amend MC - Debs

City Depts 6-20-51 48865
Overstaffed - Rafe C Chaffin

Clerk 6-21-51 48895
Controller office - fill pos

Committee 6-20-51 48875
Public Works Priority-Holland

Hearing Reporter 6-21-51 48886
In Executive Office BPW

Ice Boxes 6-19-51 48274
Native Daughters of Golden West
Resol re legis abandonment

Inter Clk Steno 6-22-51 48901
Executive Office BPW

Plan Case 3645 6-19-51 48856
SW cor Hesby St & Van Nuys Blvd
N Thatcher - chg zone

Sr Legal Steno 6-21-51 48882
City Attorney- 6 mos fr July 1

Francisco St 5-25-50 43390
Wilshire Blvd to 7th St-Ord
estab & name - BPW

Pub Works Bd 6-18-51 48836
Inter Clk Typist Bur Sanit
North Dist Yard

Note: This is a visible index ("Chainindex") form used for the alphabetic index. It is used as a cross reference to the primary numeric index.